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September 14, 2017. The day that Endicott College Junior pitcher Kevin Gould underwent Tommy John surgery on his elbow. It's an operation that pitchers have become all too familiar with in recent years, and it requires a roughly 12-month rehab process to come back from. After winning Commonwealth Coast Conference (CCC) Pitcher of the Year at Endicott as a Sophomore, Gould's career was now in jeopardy.

"I wasn't sure if I would ever be able to pick up a baseball or put on a jersey again," Gould said.

While TJ surgery has a reported 80-90 percent success rate, Gould suffered some uncommon complications in the wake of his operation. The scar from the incision opened and became infected. That meant that Gould had to head back to Dr. Luke Oh's operating table for a second procedure just 10 days later.

"Dr. Oh said he had never seen a TJ scar open up post-operation in the 10 years he had been doing the surgery," Gould said. "It was like a sign I wasn't supposed to go through with this."

Fortunately, he did go through with it, and everything went well the second time around. After sitting out the 2018 season at Endicott to rehab, Gould came back this Spring with a vengeance. The 6'3 righty posted a 2.19 ERA in 65.2 innings (11 starts) for the Gulls this year. He was named to the all-CCC first team for the second time in his collegiate career and got selected to the NEIBA All-New England Region third team.

Those accolades, combined with the fact that Blue Sox manager John Raiola watched Gould pitch first-hand the last few seasons as the Associate Head Coach of Western New England University's baseball team (a fellow member of the CCC), landed Gould with the Sox this season.

“He’s as good as anyone in Division 3 in New England,” Raiola said. “When I heard he was available, it was a no-brainer (to recruit him onto the team).”

Coming into the NECBL season, Gould had no idea what type of role he would play for the Blue Sox this summer. As a Division 3 pitcher competing in a league mostly consisting of top-tier Division 1 talent, it was hard for the right-hander to know exactly what would come of this opportunity.

“I told Coach Raiola I had no expectations coming into it the first time I talked to him back in May,” Gould said. “I just wanted to capitalize on the opportunities and situations I was put into.”

And that’s exactly what he has done. In six games (four starts) for the Valley, Gould has put up a 2.91 ERA in 24.2 innings, with just 25 hits allowed and a mere four walks. The Rollinsford, New Hampshire native also has 17 strikeouts for the Blue Sox and the team is 6-0 in games that he has appeared in.

“In a lot of ways, he’s been our most consistent starter this summer,” Raiola said. “He’s given us great effort every time he’s taken the ball and has come up huge a few times when we really needed some length.”

This summer has turned out to be everything Gould could have hoped for and more. It has given him the confidence in knowing that he can compete at a high level against top-tier talent, that his elbow is fully healthy and that his once murky baseball future is now very much alive.

“I feel more developed from working with top-level D1 and D2 athletes every day for the whole summer,” Gould said. “Just being part of the 2019 Blue Sox is something I will take with me for the rest of my life.”

Gould has been one of the most pleasant surprises this year for the 18-13-1 Blue Sox in their quest for a third straight NECBL championship. Because of that, he is on the

doorstep of another accolade, one that seemed unfathomable 22 months ago: an NECBL All-Star selection. But he won't be able to get there without your help.

On Monday, it was announced by the NECBL that Gould was selected as one of 13 players eligible for the All-Star fan vote. The player with the most votes in each of the North and South divisions will be named to the All-Star team as the 30th, and final, member. Gould, who credits his parents, coaches and Dr. Oh with helping him get back to this level of pitching, is humbled by this possibility.

“If I were an NECBL All-Star, it would be a great accomplishment,” Gould said. “After almost two years of hard work, it feels good to have the chance to be voted onto such a prestigious team.”

To help Kevin make it onto the All-Star team, and join six of his Blue Sox teammates in Vermont this Sunday, you can vote for him at this link until July 25 at 11:59pm:

<http://pointstreaksites.com/view/necbl/league-49/2019-fan-vote>